

March 18, 2008

YHS BLPC Members,

As you might imagine, the Yorktown Civic Association vehemently opposes using any part of Chestnut Hills Park, the children's park along North Harrison Street, for the Yorktown High construction worker parking.

This park has become Arlington's most heavily used and popular children's park in the entire county. Using any part of it for the construction worker parking would absolutely destroy the attractiveness and safety of this wonderful community asset.

What is being proposed would be an absolute eyesore. It would look like an auto-salvage yard - think industrial-looking compound. It simply does NOT belong in a location sandwiched between a children's playground on one side and single-family homes on the other. And it would certainly create run-off problems for the new track next door in Greenbrier Park.

While there may be a higher cost to some other location, the cost to the nearby residents would be devastating. In a depressed real estate market, any negative like this could easily shave 10 to 20% off the value of a home. APS can, indeed, be asking the adjacent homeowners to take losses in their home values well in excess of what they think they might save over some other location.

To make sure everyone understands the financial impact, we have 23 homes immediately facing or adjacent to Chestnut Hills Park, with a combined assessed valuation of over \$18 million. A 10% drop in values could cost these families \$1.8 million, or more than double the APS "savings" over their most expensive alternative solution. This cost must be added to the financial equation.

The portion of the park being considered does not have playground equipment on it, or fields, or picnic shelters. But that doesn't mean that it isn't used by park goers - kids fly kites, and play catch, and sled, and walk their dogs in this open space. Parks are supposed to have open green space, but sadly that is something that is in very short supply in Arlington.

It is a wonderful area of green space that the county acquired about 9 years ago. Parks and Recreation has not been able to make improvements because of the cost of their big projects, and our neighborhood hasn't been able to improve it through the Neighborhood Conservation program because we've had to use those dollars on sidewalks. Our vision for folding this area into the rest of the park has long been documented - a vision that we would like to finally implement now that the Greenbrier Park field renovation is complete.

It is highly inappropriate that this issue was not discussed during the BLPC process, nor any of the review meetings held by the county. I'm being told that much of the staff work on this issue (e.g. contacts with owners of nearby parking lots) actually occurred 6 to 8 months ago. Clearly that suggests that the potential financial impacts of this decision were known well in advance of the approval of the project by both boards. Instead, the need to use Chestnut Hills is just now being presented as a *fait accompli* - a potential budget buster only known after the rest of the

budget for the project was put bed. Something is very wrong with this approach, and our neighborhood and the children that use this park will be left to pick up the tab.

I respectfully ask that none of you fall into the trap of thinking that any part of Chestnut Hills Park provides a quick and cost-free solution to the school's construction parking needs. That simply is not the case.

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